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April 4, 2006

The Honorable Dirk Kempthorne
Governor of the State of Idaho
Boise, Idaho 83720

Dear Governor Kempthorne:

Congratulations on your nomination to be Secretary of the Department of Interior. I am confident that you, as a westerner, former senator and current governor, understand how important the issues managed daily by the Interior Department are to my State of Colorado.

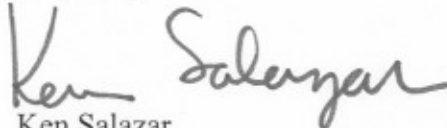
I look forward to our meeting tomorrow. I am interested in learning more about your views on a variety of subjects, and I would like to hear your vision for the Department. Also, I would appreciate knowing more about your thoughts and probable approach to the following issues, among the many others that are certain to come up during the confirmation process:

- National Park Service management policy changes. The proposed revisions to the National Park Service's management policies would replace the long-standing conservation mandate of the Park Service with a less protective approach to park management. Moreover, the new policies have not been properly vetted with the public.
- Bark beetle infestation and wildfire prevention. The need for hazard fuels reduction and forest health treatment could not be more urgent, but the Department's resources and funding levels are inadequate to meet this need on lands managed by DOI.
- Public land sales. Secretary Norton recommended that Congress allow the sale of public lands by the Bureau of Land Management to "reduce the deficit"—a proposal that has drawn widespread bipartisan criticism and opposition.
- PILT. The Payment in Lieu of Taxes (PILT) program is vital to counties in Rural America whose tax bases are diminished by large federal land holdings. These rural communities that are withering on the vine deserve permanent funding for PILT.
- The Land and Water Conservation Fund. I am working hard to revitalize the stateside grant program of the LWCF, and I hope I can count on you to help me restore this vital component of America's land conservation agenda.

- BLM's leasing policies. The administration's rush to lease as much acreage as possible for oil and gas exploration and development, including leasing on sensitive lands, and without regard to legitimate local concerns.
- Oil Shale Development. America's expansive oil shale resources offer hope for expanded domestic oil production, but the Interior Department should not proceed with commercial lease sales until industry has proven the technology for commercial production and has demonstrated that production can occur in an environmentally sound manner.
- Endangered Species Act. You have demonstrated bi-partisan leadership in earlier efforts in the Senate to improve the Endangered Species Act, and I trust you are willing once again to work to uphold its underlying principles and basic goals and to oppose any legislation that would gut the Act.

I look forward to hearing your views on each of these important issues. Thank you for your continuing commitment to good stewardship and to the protection of America's public lands.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Ken Salazar". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Ken" written in a smaller, more compact script than the last name "Salazar", which is larger and more prominent.

Ken Salazar
United States Senator